

Opening Statement
Chairman Mark Souder

“Preserving and Maintaining the National Parks”

Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform

April 22, 2005

Good afternoon and thank you all for joining us. This hearing is the second in a series of hearings about the critical issues facing the National Park Service.

The problems facing the National Park Service (NPS) are not new. They have been developing for a long time and throughout many administrations. Administrations of both parties have ignored the problem or paid paltry attention to issues that will not go away.

It cannot be stressed enough that each and every park is unique. The solution to a park's problems will not be the same as another park. There are certain issues, however, such as management efficiency and homeland security that impact the National Park Service as a whole.

This hearing will focus on issues facing the National Park Service at the national, service-wide level. Of particular concern is the strain Homeland Security costs are putting on the NPS. The events of September 11 made us realize that our nation was a target, and that many of our cherished landmarks may be particularly vulnerable. This shift has not come without a price.

The National Park Service has been hit particularly hard by the sudden demand of protecting landmarks. Many of our monuments in Washington, New York, and icons throughout the country require special protection. Regrettably, the operations budget of the NPS has borne the brunt of these additional costs. Changes in the threat level from yellow to orange cost the NPS around \$65,000 per day.

The National Park Service's ability to fulfill its mission is under strain. Additional burdens like Homeland Security costs make it even harder to accomplish its goals.

Moreover, these additional burdens when added to a growing system, forces service, preservation, and management at existing NPS units to suffer. As time marches on, it is inevitable that additional units, particularly historic structures will be added to NPS. We cannot simply stop adding significant sites; but how can we continue to add important places to the NPS without failing existing NPS units.

There are no easy answers, but my goal during these hearings is to get a better handle on the issues facing the NPS. In an effort to get some answers, the Subcommittee welcomes a variety of witnesses here today, including Steven Martin, Deputy Director, National Park Service. Also present are Gretchen Long, Past Chair, Board of Trustees, National Parks Conservation Association; Vin Cipolla, President, National Parks Foundation; Emily E. Wadhams, Vice President of Public Policy, National Trust for Historic Preservation; Denis Galvin, Retired Park Ranger, Former Superintendent of Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Everglades National Parks; and Peyton Knight, American Land Rights Association.